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A NEW MIRACLE AT ROME;

BEING AN ACCOUNT

OF A

MIRACULOUS CURE,

RECEIVED THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE  
BLESSED JOHN BERCHEMANS, S.J.,

*On the 8th of October, 1869.*

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TRANSLATION AUTHORIZED BY THE FATHERS OF THE SOCIETY OF  
JESUS AT GHENT.

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A. M. D. G.

## MIRACULOUS CURE.

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THE miraculous favours which Our Lord sometimes grants through the intercession of His Saints, are well calculated to increase the piety of the faithful, as well as their confidence in that intercession. But how are we to arrive at this salutary result, if these miraculous facts are allowed to be forgotten, or passed by in silence, unknown to all but those who have benefited by their occurrence? It is to prevent a loss of this kind that we now record, for the greater glory of God and to the honour of the Blessed John Berchmans, a wonderful cure which was obtained at Rome on the 8th of October, 1869.

For more than fourteen years Madame Dominique Gagliardi, who suffered from an internal tumour, had



been subject to frequent attacks of the violent pains which usually accompany this disease. Her sufferings were at times so acute, that she could neither lie down in bed, nor rise without being bent nearly double ; and that, if she had to move a few steps, she could only do so by the aid of a strong pressure applied to the diseased part of her body.

At first she sought relief from medical skill, and consulted the most renowned physicians at Ancona, Ravenna, and particularly at Rome, where she most usually resided. All agreed in recognising the same disease ; but, if we except some short-lived relief, no one succeeded in finding any remedy for her case.

During the summer of 1869, the sufferer was at the baths of Vicarello, when she noticed that a tumour of a very dangerous character was forming in her left breast. On her return to Rome, in the month of August, she had it examined by Dr. Ceccarelli, who, not being aware of the existence of an internal tumour, thought it right to recommend an operation for the purpose of preventing cancer. One can easily imagine the lady's terror at this proposal ; nevertheless, she consented, in the hope by this means to get relief from the sickness and pains in the stomach which tormented her. Before the day fixed for the operation, she happened to meet Dr. Rossi at the

shop of the apothecary, Sinimberghi ; she had been Dr. Rossi's patient on previous occasions, and she now spoke to him of her new and painful complaint.

Dr. Rossi was at that time accompanied by Dr. Mazzoni, and both of them, after examining the new tumour, objected to the proposed operation ; the other doctor, indeed, would never have made the suggestion, if he had been told of the existence of the old internal tumour. Dr. Rossi and Dr. Mazzoni confined themselves, for the time, to prescribing some sedative liniment, besides doses of iodide of potassium, and other medicine.

The patient used these remedies immediately, but they did not lessen her pains ; on the contrary they rather increased them ; and, though she endeavoured to bear them, her spasms and her groans were so fearful, that Captain Horace Guadagni, who had a room in her house for his studio, used to stay away as much as he could, because he could not bear to witness such sufferings. In order to leave no means untried for the relief of the sufferer under such trying circumstances, another physician was consulted, Dr. Panegrossi. After having carefully examined the state of the patient, he also decided against an operation, because the excision of the outward tumour could not fail to irritate the internal swelling, and thereby probably endanger the life of the patient.

When questioned, in a confidential interview, as to the real state of the sufferer, he said at last :—"What would you have anyone do for this dilapidated constitution ? It only remains to continue the remedies already prescribed, so as to alleviate her sufferings and prolong her life for some short time." So decided an opinion left no room for hope, and the case was considered incurable.

But, in a case where human hope had vanished, God, ever admirable in His saints, bestowed confidence to ask help from above. The circumstance arose in the following manner :—During the stay of Madame Gagliardi at the baths of Vicarello, she made the acquaintance of a Jesuit priest, and spoke to him of her sufferings. He had an opportunity of seeing her again at the time when her illness was at its worst, and was pronounced incurable ; in fact, the breast was fearfully swollen, and suppuration had set in, together with symptoms of incipient cancer. The Father exhorted the sufferer to recommend herself to the Blessed Berchmans, by making a *triduo*, or three days' devotion in his honour. In order to excite in her a lively confidence, he procured for her three small packets of dust gathered from the coffin of this saintly innocent, a little cross made of the boards of the room the blessed youth occupied,

as well as some portion of the wadding in which his venerable head was wrapped. In the hopeless state to which the patient was reduced, she accepted joyfully the proffered advice, and wished to act on it at the moment. Madame Gagliardi began on the 30th of September the *triduo* with great fervour; to the head of her bed she hung a picture of her heavenly patron; she invoked him with lively confidence, particularly when she swallowed a small portion of the dust in a little water: she carefully kept under her pillow the little cross and the wadding. Her prayers and affectionate proofs of devotion were not fruitless. At first, during the *triduo*, the disease, which had previously made rapid progress, seemed to remain stationary, and the agonizing pains which used to torture her, became less insupportable. This improvement increased her confidence, and at the conclusion of the *triduo* she resolved to continue her prayers for nine days. The night of the 8th of October was the last day of the Novena. Madame Gagliardi, feeling all at once an usually violent pain in the affected parts, applied thereto the cross, invoking the Blessed John; but in the burst of fervour she pressed the cross to her so vehemently that she was seized with sickness. She then took the wadding, and placed it where she felt most pain. Soon after this her sufferings ceased, and

she was able to sleep quietly a short time. The next day, wonderful to relate, on awaking, Madame Gagliardi found herself in the enjoyment of such a state of health as she had not known for many years. Every symptom of the disease had disappeared from the hitherto affected parts; she got up with renewed life and vigour, and was well nigh crazed at the happy change; she betook herself to her domestic concerns as if she had never been ill. Impossible to describe the rapture of this poor lady thus rescued from the portals of the tomb! Suffice it to say, that for the two or three first days, she could do nothing but think on her great happiness and enjoy it. When thus transported with joy and gratitude, she wished to inform Captain Guadagni of her miraculous cure, she only found words to say, "Do you know? I am perfectly cured."

The Captain thought she was joking, and replied in the same tone, "Go away, you are surely jesting with me; you cannot mean that you are cured."

Soon after, Dr. Rossi came for his usual visit. The lady repeated to him the same words, without adding more. The medical man carefully examined the place where the disease previously existed, and found that every trace of the tumour had vanished. In his astonishment he knew not what to say.

Then the lady asked him if her disease had been really a tumour ?

“Do you think, Madame, I was blind,” he answered, “when I examined you the other day, and told you so ?”

He returned three days later, to watch the march of this phenomenon, as he pleased to call it, not as yet knowing that she had had recourse to the B. Berchmans ; and after having gone through all his scientific investigations, he was obliged to confess that the cure was perfect. This unprecedented cure so astonished Dr. Panegrossi, when he too heard of it, that he at first refused to believe it, saying it was totally impossible—as indeed it was to all human means ; but on hearing that his patient had addressed herself to the Blessed John Berchmans, he bowed his head, saying, “When such physicians interfere, *we* have nothing more to say !”

I cannot pass over in silence an incident which took place the night of this wonderful cure, and which may appear accidental, but may have been something more. During the latter phase of her illness, Madame Gagliardi had received a bottle of holy water, blessed with the relics of S. Ignatius, which she had been advised to drink ; she had also recommended herself to this great

Saint. During the night, between the 8th and 9th of October, on which her cure took place, during her sleep she heard a sudden noise like to the breaking of glass. Soon, perfectly awake, she listened, and heard the dropping of water on the boards of her room. She at first supposed that her niece, Theresa de Rubis, had forgotten to close the tap of the kitchen cistern, and called to her to see to it. The young person obeyed, but found everything in order and perfectly closed. Still the dropping of the water continued; when presently both these ladies observed that the bottle containing the water of S. Ignatius had burst of itself, and the water was slowly flowing to the ground. No cause could be assigned for the breaking of the bottle; but the patient understood that S. Ignatius wished to show her that, as one of his spiritual children had cured her, she had no further need of the water blessed by the application of his holy relics.

To conclude this account, I ought to state the over-weening gratitude Madame Gagliardi felt to her heavenly physician; but words are powerless to describe it. As soon as she could obtain the necessary permission, she visited the room formerly occupied by the Saint at the Roman College, now transformed into a chapel. Scarcely had she entered when, melting into tears, she fell on her

knees, and kissed repeatedly the ground once trodden by the Blessed Berchmans. While her eyes were fixed on his portrait, she exclaimed repeatedly, "There is my true deliverer!" Some days later she came to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and laid on his altar a very beautiful *ex-voto* in choice silver, destined to perpetuate the memory of the wonderful favour she had received. On this occasion she affirmed, in the presence of several persons, that she felt stronger and better than she had ever been, even in her early youth.

May our Lord grant that this recital, which is entitled only to purely human faith so long as the Church has not pronounced on it her infallible judgment, may revive the confidence of all who are lingering in weary suffering; and may they feel the necessity of invoking the help of the Saints who reign with God in heaven!

I could add the testimony of Dr. Panegrossi, but I refrain, not wishing to lengthen this recital. It will be enough to repeat the written testimony of Captain Guadagni, who had been present at the doctor's visits, and who had been perfectly cognizant of all the changes of the disease, besides having been the first witness of the marvellous cure:—

"In honour of the Blessed John Berchmans, I, the  
"undersigned, declare the truth of what follows, and



“ am ready to confirm the same upon oath. For several  
“ years I was intimately acquainted with Madame Domi-  
“ nique Gagliardi, and always knew her to be suffering,  
“ more or less severely, from an internal complaint,  
“ which, according to the declared opinion of Dr.  
“ Grano, and the particular report of Dr. Rossi, was an  
“ intestinal tumour.

“ During the year 1869 another and much larger  
“ tumour declared itself in the left breast, as was again  
“ verified by the following eminent medical men:—  
“ Doctors Rossi, Mazzoni, Ceccarelli, and Panegrossi.  
“ All these prescribed various medicines, as well as  
“ liniments to the part affected, but without relieving  
“ the patient; on the contrary, everything seemed to  
“ aggravate her state. Reduced almost to despair, this  
“ poor lady having received from a Jesuit Father advice  
“ to begin a novena in honour of the Blessed John  
“ Berchmans, she and I joined in this devotion. At the  
“ close of the nine days, the sick person, more than  
“ ever tormented by the complaint, felt inspired to place  
“ a relic of the Blessed John on the tumours, where-  
“ upon, wonderful to relate, scarcely had the relic  
“ touched the place, when the pains ceased and the  
“ swelling disappeared. This happened on the evening  
“ of the 8th October, 1869, and on the 9th Madame

“Gagliardi was able to rise and go about her household affairs, as if she had never been ill.

“In testimony of which I sign and affirm all that I have stated.

(Signed)

“HORACE GUADAGNI.

“Captain.”

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### THE BLESSED JOHN BERCHMANS.

THE Blessed John Berchmans was born at the little town of Diest, near Louvain; the house still exists. His father, who was by trade a tanner, was much respected, and was in our language Sheriff. Blessed John Berchmans was born the 13th March, 1599. His childhood was distinguished by uniform meekness and obedience; he seemed to be exempt from the natural faults of infancy; at an early age he was frequently at the church, never playing in the streets with the children of his age. At the early age of 11 he was confided, by his parents, to the care of the Professor Watter Van Stiphent. He was, later, placed under the care of the Rev. S. F. Emmerich, Religious of the Abbey of Tongerlo,

Curate of Nôtre Dame of Diest, who had established in his house a kind of seminary for young people who were to be educated for the Church. As the father of the Blessed John Berchmans was obliged in his business to receive persons of all conditions, he foresaw the dangers which his youthful son was exposed to in his paternal home; therefore determined to make every necessary sacrifice to keep him pure and uncontaminated; he was equally careful for his other children. He entered the Society of Jesus, and received the tonsure in March, 1618. The day following the demise of his mother he received sub-deacon's orders. He followed carefully all the prescribed exercises in the house of F. Emmerich, and made his first communion between the age of 11 and 12, after which he regularly confessed every week, and received the Holy Communion every fortnight. His devotion to Our Blessed Lady was extreme. More than once he was found in some corner of his home on his knees, praying to Our Lady; and through her special protection, like his great patron, he never felt any temptations contrary to purity; he fled from the slightest danger as from the face of a serpent. Shortly after his father announced to him that, owing to his having met serious reverses, he could no longer meet the necessary expenses of his career, and urged

on him the necessity of his adopting the career of the secular priesthood, as thereby he might assist his family. John implored his father, with tears, to grant him a few years longer, assuring him of the truth of his vocation.

Whilst Blessed John was at Malines, all his professors were soon convinced of his angelic character and goodness, and all loved and cherished him accordingly. He was always gay and smiling, thereby contradicting the erroneous ideas of those who make sanctity to consist in a disagreeable, austere exterior; nevertheless, with this gentle exterior demeanour, he, then only 17 years of age, resisted with angelic firmness all the entreaties, nay, commands, of his father to abandon his holy vocation. His conduct whilst in the noviciate was the example for all; his obedience, attention, and care of the most trifling incidents. Being sent to Rome, he rejoiced at arriving in the Eternal City. His companion of the way died during the third year of his studies from a chest affection. Blessed John Berchmans did not long survive him. On the 5th August, 1621, he was attacked by diarrhœa, followed by fever, and he sank from pure exhaustion, notwithstanding the great care bestowed on him. He expired on Friday, 13th August, 1621, aged 22 years and 9 months, with his eyes fixed on the crucifix, his rosary, and his missal. The many miracles

which attested his sanctity induced the Court of Rome, at the request of many very influential persons, to pronounce his Beatification by a Papal Bull, signed 9th May, 1865, in the 19th year of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pius IX., countersigned by his Eminence

NICHOLAS CLARELLI-PARACCIANI,  
Cardinal Priest of the Title of S. Pietro in  
Vincoli, and Secretary of Apostolic  
Briefs.





































